News release

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Met Office launches new weather information service for ATCs

1 February 2004

Costly weather related delays are causing inefficiency and reduced capacity at airports, according to the Met Office. Whilst airlines have long made use of weather information to plan and adapt flight plans, air traffic controllers have not traditionally had access to the necessary real-time information, meaning that the crucial last stages of flights can be delayed.

In order to combat the problem, the Met Office has developed a new advanced service for ATC providers, to be demonstrated at the ATC Maastricht show (10-12 February 2004). The web based service offers ATC providers access to real time weather information including convective cell movement, runway headwind and cross wind forecasts and probabilistic visibility forecasts. It also offers three day planning forecasts. The service is being extensively tested by London Air Traffic Control Centre (LATCC).

"Relying on pilots for weather information is leaving ATCs ill equipped to respond proactively to changes in weather, and to make best possible use of available landing slots", said Doug Johnson, Head of Civil Aviation at the Met Office, "Using timely, easily interpretable short term weather forecasts and up to date real-time information allows controllers to make better decisions on hold positioning, aircraft spacing and flow control to minimise delays and increase airport capacity".

"This new service enhances our ability to offer the most up to date and relevant weather information to the aviation industry, when it needs it and where it needs it. The service has been designed specifically to convey essential weather information in a suitable format to help inform critical air traffic management decisions."

The Met Office is one of only two ICAO recognised World Area Forecasting Centres (WAFC), providing the aviation community with global forecast weather above 24,000ft. It also provides low-level forecasting services (below 24,000ft) to the UK ATC providers, airports and airlines. As a world leading meteorological service, services developed by the Met Office enable customers to better mitigate the impact of weather events and can be crucial to the aviation industry in maintaining the highest possible standards of safety and efficiency.

The Met Office will also be using the show to demonstrate its Open Runway service, designed to provide airport management with bespoke services necessary for the advance planning of gritting and snow clearance activities. The service includes a 5-day outlook, as well as a detailed forecast of temperature, dew point and runway surface temperature for the next 24hrs, all based on site-specific information.

Notes:

The Met Office will be exhibiting at this year's ATC Maastricht, 10 - 12 February at stand 726, demonstrating its range of cutting edge meteorological forecasting services for aviation, and launching its new service specifically designed for ATC providers.

About the Met Office

The Met Office is a world leader in the provision of advice on the weather and the natural environment. For 150 years, it has been the UK's national weather service, providing services to government departments, companies in commerce, industry and the media. However, the Met Office does not just focus on 'the weather'. It looks at the impacts of the weather on business and the environment and has expanded into providing environmental science services, including hydrology and oceanography. The Met Office is also expanding its international operations and is extending co-operation and forging partnerships within the international 'weather' communities.

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